

## ***Space Feminisms: People, Planets, Power. Biotechne: Interthinking Art, Science and Design: Book Review***

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***Space Feminisms: People, Planets, Power. Biotechne: Interthinking Art, Science and Design***

| **Editors— Marie-Pier Boucher, Claire Webb, Annick Bureau, and Nahum Romero** |

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### **Launching Feminist Futures**

*Space Feminisms: People, Planets, Power. Biotechne: Interthinking Art, Science and Design*

(2024) is located at the forefront of critical space studies, combining feminist theory with space science, art, architecture, and cultural studies. The anthology interrogates how terrestrial frameworks of gender, race, class, and ableism are not only echoed but also reproduced in imaginaries of extraterrestrial futures. Editors Marie-Pier Boucher, Claire Webb, Annick Bureau, and Nahum Romero curate an ambitious interdisciplinary collection that redefines outer space as a deeply political, gendered, and racialized domain. It challenges the myth of space as a neutral “elsewhere” by asking: Whose bodies get to orbit? Whose knowledge counts in space-making? What power structures are being launched into orbit alongside satellites and rovers?

Drawing together essays, artworks, and interviews with scientists, astronauts, engineers, and artists, the volume interrogates how power systems rooted in gender, race, class, ability, and coloniality are being extended into space. It combines critical analysis (humanities and social sciences), technical roundtables (from rockets to space policy), and cultural production (visual art,

architecture, speculative fiction, speculative design). The contributors, ranging from astronauts and aerospace engineers to artists and feminist theorists, call for a radical reorientation of space studies. Rather than viewing space exploration as just a step forward for mankind, they demonstrate how it perpetuates the same power systems and inequality— such as colonialism, sexism, and ecological devastation— that have structured life on Earth.

The volume is methodically structured into seven interrelated sections that reflect its transdisciplinary ethos. The first part, “Diagramming Space Feminisms,” provides the theoretical foundation for the collection, outlining the critical frameworks that guide its interventions. The second section, “Space Feminisms, Humanities, and Social Sciences,” includes essays on planetary feminism, Soviet-era space imaginaries, care ethics, gender, and reproduction in space, highlighting the sociohistorical and philosophical dimensions of space exploration. The third part, “Space Feminisms, Space Sciences, and Engineering,” features roundtables and interviews with astronauts and engineers, offering insights into the gendered dynamics of space institutions and technologies. The fourth section, “Space Feminisms, Art, and Culture,” investigates cultural productions—ranging from film and performance to indigiqueer futurisms— that challenge dominant narratives of space. The fifth section, “Space Feminisms, and Art Gallery,” presents a curated portfolio of visual artworks that reimagine space through feminist and decolonial lenses. The sixth part, “Space Feminisms, Architecture, and Design,” addresses the politics of infrastructure, accessibility, and universal design in space habitats, with particular focus on embodiment and intimate space. Finally, “Space Feminisms Anarchive” serves as a repository of historical ephemera, mapping how gender and power have been inscribed in space imaginaries across time. Together, these seven parts form a comprehensive and multidimensional interrogation of how power, identity, and imagination intersect in the making of space futures. It concludes with an Epilogue that wraps up the themes and motivations of the anthology.

This transdisciplinary work reflects the editors’ methodology: “radical and alternative modes of inquiry around space” (Boucher and Webb 10) that disrupt normative power structures

by relocating feminist thinking into extraterrestrial contexts. One of the key strengths of *Space Feminisms: People, Planets, Power* lies in its theoretical rigor and planetary reach. The volume challenges the assumption of outer space as a neutral frontier, instead framing it as a colonized terrain where Earth-bound inequalities—particularly those related to gender, race, and class—are projected outward. Essays on Black planetary feminism and Soviet-era gender legacies work to reorient space discourse away from Western-centric paradigms. A notable feature of the collection is its inclusion of Interviews with female astronauts like Jessica Meir and Soyeon Yi, which offer firsthand accounts of gender bias and cultural tension in astronaut training and life in microgravity. Such personal accounts add a human dimension to theoretical arguments: Jessica Meir reflects on the interplay of motherhood and life aboard the ISS, while Soyeon Yi discusses the sexism she encountered during her Soviet-era training, poignantly recalling the moment she was told, “you are smart and a real astronaut” (87).

Equally powerful are the aesthetic and political interventions showcased in the curated art gallery section. Through installations, performances, and design-based projects, artists subvert masculinist and heteronormative tropes that have historically dominated space representation. These artworks function as “counternarratives” within the cultural domain of space, offering alternative visions and imaginaries. The volume also advances critical conversations about material accessibility in space architecture and design. Chapters addressing universal design highlight how infrastructures—from sleeping arrangements to personal protective equipment (PPE)—often reflect normative assumptions about the body. By questioning who space habitats are designed for, the volume foregrounds issues of ableism and embodiment, asking a crucial question: who gets to fit in space?

The strength of *Space Feminisms* lies in its methodological and epistemological hybridity. These narratives ground the theoretical essays, adding lived depth to abstract discussions about embodiment and inclusion. The inclusion of speculative art and design, such as Adriana Knouf’s “MOONSHADOW” and Indigenous feminist futurisms, blurs the boundary between science and

storytelling. These works embody what Donna Haraway might call *speculative fabulation*—imaginative tools for worlding futures where kinship, justice, and multispecies survival take precedence over conquest and control (Haraway, *Staying With the Trouble* 213). Scholars working at the intersection of posthumanism, critical design studies, and decolonial theory will find the volume especially compelling. It complements frameworks like Rosi Braidotti’s affirmative posthumanism, which foregrounds relationality and material interdependence, and Sylvia Wynter’s critique of the colonial “overrepresentation of Man” in global knowledge systems.

*Space Feminisms* joins a growing body of interdisciplinary scholarship at the intersection of feminism, science, and space studies. Compared to Catherine D’Ignazio and Lauren F. Klein’s *Data Feminism* (2020), which brings an intersectional feminist lens to algorithmic bias and data ethics, *Space Feminisms* moves beyond digital infrastructures to examine the material, bodily, and geopolitical dimensions of space. It also builds on speculative traditions found in *Afrofuturism 2.0* (Nelson et al., 2016) and the works of Octavia Butler, but grounds them in academic, scientific, and policy-related contexts, offering both visionary and infrastructural feminist critiques of how space is being imagined and built.

While its breadth is intellectually exciting, the book’s eclectic nature sometimes sacrifices cohesion. As Jeff Foust notes in *The Space Review*, “some chapters will resonate more strongly than others depending on the reader’s disciplinary background” (Foust). It is the diverse range of voices – feminist theorists, astronauts, and speculative artists – along with thematic divisions, that makes the volume rich in content. Equally diversified is the format used, from academic essays to roundtable transcripts and visual portfolios from more than twenty different contributors, which leads to the content flow lacking cohesion at times. The book’s technical jargon and cerebral tone could prove to be a hindrance, particularly for those outside the fields of feminist theory, critical design, and space policy. The pricing could also limit its access among solo researchers, academics, artists – the people it aims to serve. However, *Space Feminisms* provides a significant contribution to feminist scholarship by keeping its scope and focus beyond the confines of earth.

It reasons that space is a material and symbolic terrain where gendered, racialized, and colonial systems of power are still at work, and it is not a space of neutrality. The anthology not only extends eco- and techno-feminist discourses into extraterrestrial spaces but also insists that space is not a metaphor—it is material, historical, and geopolitical. It invites readers to think relationally and ecologically, recognizing that the same systems of oppression shaping life on Earth are being projected into space. In this sense, the anthology aligns with feminist environmental justice movements and decolonial space ethics, urging scholars to expand their scope beyond the terrestrial. It asks: how can we imagine feminist futures not just on Earth, but off it?

*Space Feminisms: People, Planets, Power* is an expansive and thought-provoking collection that brings feminist theory, speculative art, and science into productive, and sometimes uneasy, dialogue. It provides a vital and compelling contribution to space studies by expanding the reach of feminist discourse beyond the boundaries of Earth. Its diverse collaborations, from artists to astronauts, emphasize the need of pluralistic design, inclusive imaginaries, and meticulous structural critique in shaping future space exploration. While its scope may at times feel dense, the volume is indispensable for scholars in Science, Technology & Society (STS), feminist science studies, gender studies, environmental humanities, posthumanism, design, and so much more. The anthology offers a rich repository of theoretical insights and empirical narratives that challenge and expand discussions on equity, justice, and materiality in extra-terrestrial contexts.

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#### **Bionote**

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